4 PART MINI-SERIES
ROY & DANN THOMAS and DICK GIORDANO
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JUNE 85
JONNI THUNDER
A.K.A. Thunderbolt™
PRIVATE EYE BY TRADE--
SUPER-HERO BY CHANCE!
1935
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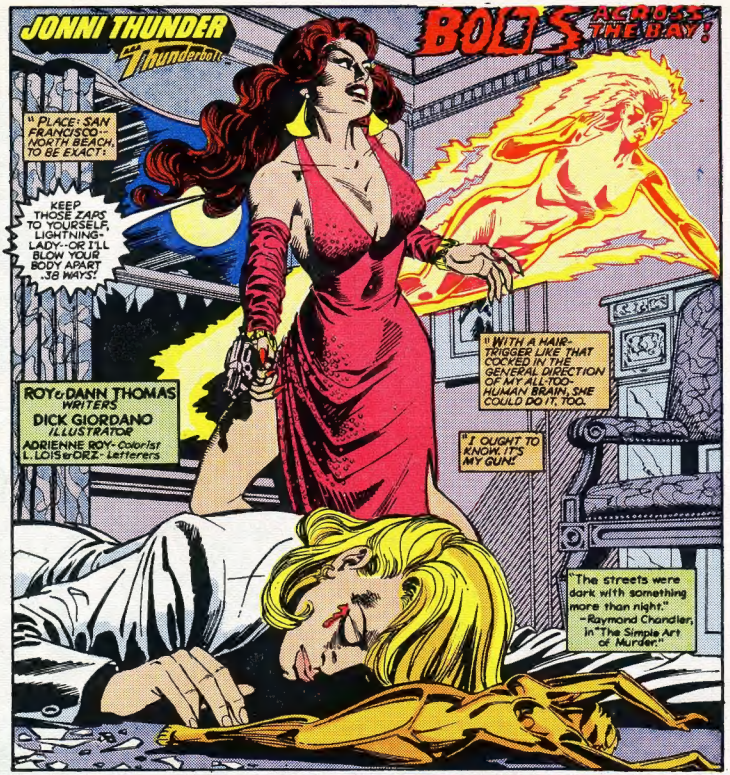
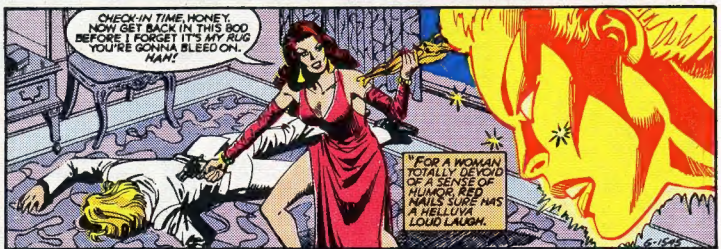

JONNI THUNDER
and Thunderbolt
BOLO'S ACROSS THE BAY!
"PLACE: SAN FRANCISCO... NORTH BEACH, TO BE EXACT!
KEEP THOSE ZAPS TO YOURSELF, LIGHTNING-LADY--OR I'LL BLOW YOUR BODY APART .38 WAYS!
"WITH A HAIR-TRIGGER LIKE THAT COCKED IN THE GENERAL DIRECTION OF MY ALL-TOO-HUMAN BRAIN, SHE COULD DO IT, TOO.
"I OUGHT TO KNOW. IT'S MY GUN!
ROY & DANN THOMAS
WRITERS
DICK GIORDANO
ILLUSTRATOR
ADRIENNE ROY - Colorist
L. LOIS & ORZ - Letterers
"The streets were dark with something more than night."
-Raymond Chandler, in "The Simple Art of Murder."


CHECK-IN TIME, HONEY. NOW GET BACK IN THIS BOD BEFORE I FORGET IT'S MY RUG YOU'RE GONNA BLEED ON. HAH!
"FOR A WOMAN TOTALLY DEVOID OF A SENSE OF HUMOR, RED NAILS SURE HAS A HELLUVA LOUD LAUGH.

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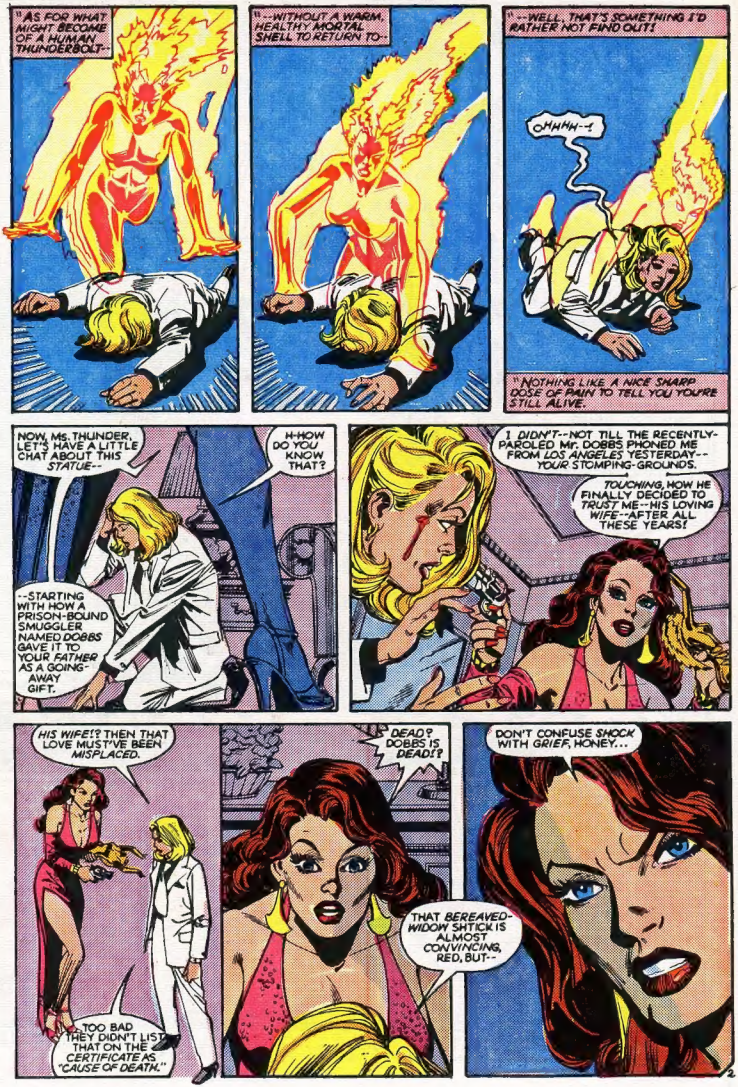
"AS FOR WHAT MIGHT BECOME OF A HUMAN THUNDERBOLT--
"--WITHOUT A WARM, HEALTHY MORTAL SHELL TO RETURN TO--
"--WELL, THAT'S SOMETHING I'D RATHER NOT FIND OUT!"
OHHH--!
"NOTHING LIKE A NICE SHARP DOSE OF PAIN TO TELL YOU YOU'RE STILL ALIVE.
NOW, MS. THUNDER, LET'S HAVE A LITTLE CHAT ABOUT THIS STATUE--
--STARTING WITH HOW A PRISON-BOUND SMUGGLER NAMED DOBBS GAVE IT TO YOUR FATHER AS A GOING-AWAY GIFT.
H-HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?
I DIDN'T--NOT TILL THE RECENTLY-PAROLED Mr. DOBBS PHONED ME FROM LOS ANGELES YESTERDAY--YOUR STOMPING-GROUNDS.
TOUCHING, HOW HE FINALLY DECIDED TO TRUST ME--HIS LOVING WIFE--AFTER ALL THESE YEARS!
HIS WIFE!? THEN THAT LOVE MUST'VE BEEN MISPLACED.
TOO BAD THEY DIDN'T LIST THAT ON THE CERTIFICATE AS "CAUSE OF DEATH."
DEAD? DOBBS IS DEAD!?
THAT BEREAVED-WIDOW SHTICK IS ALMOST CONVINCING, RED, BUT--
DON'T CONFUSE SHOCK WITH GRIEF, HONEY...

BESIDES, DEATH IS HARDLY A STRANGER TO THIS LITTLE ICON.
IT WAS CARVED FROM AN INCA SACRIFICIAL STONE CENTURIES AGO...
...A MOST UNUSUAL STONE, ONCE STRUCK BY THE HAND OF APU ILLAPU, THE INCA LIGHTNING GOD.
ONLY... A LEGEND, OF COURSE!
I CAN TELL BY THE CRAZED LOOK SHE SHOOTS ME FROM BEHIND THOSE FALSE EYELASHES THAT AT LEAST ONE OF US IS BUYING THAT OLD-INDIAN-WIVES' TALE.
AND WHO KNOWS? MAYBE TWO OF US?
"THAT'S WHEN THE LIGHTS COME ON AGAIN.
Hmmm... SEEMS THE CITY'S FINALLY REPAIRED WHATEVER DAMAGE YOUR REDDY-KILOWATT SELF DID TO THEIR PRECIOUS POWER EQUIPMENT.
I'D HATE TO THINK I'D PUT A CRIMP IN THE CHICKIE CLUB'S RECEIPTS FOR THE NIGHT.
AFTER ALL, CAN'T VERY WELL RUN A RED-LIGHT BUSINESS WITHOUT THE RED LIGHTS, CAN YOU?
SHUT UP, GIRLIE, OR I'LL--
LOOK WHAT WE CAUGHT SNEAKIN' DOWN THE STAIRS, BOSS.
HELLO, MR. TRUMP... OR SHOULD I CALL YOU HOUDINI?
I CAN SEE I'M GOING TO HAVE TO HIRE A BOY SCOUT TO TEACH YOU GLAMAZONS HOW TO TIE KNOTS.
BRING HIM HERE.

SHAKE HANDS WITH A FELLOW P.I., MS. THUNDER--OR HAVE YOU AND HARRISON TRUMP ALREADY MET?
WE GOT IN A QUICK ROUND OF WET-LAWN WRESTLING BEFORE BREAKFAST.
C'MON, RED. YOU'VE GOT TOO MUCH TASTE TO GO AROUND POINTING GUNS AT PEOPLE.
IF I WERE YOU, HARRY, I'D BE WORRYING LESS ABOUT MY TASTE--AND MORE ABOUT MY CRUNCH.
TIME TO TAKE OUT THE GARBAGE, LADIES. LET'S GO.
:GULP!:
CLICK!
HARDLY THE PAYOFF YOU EXPECTED FOR PINCHING MY LITTLE STATUE, IS IT, TRUMP?
DOWNSTAIRS, THE REGULAR BUMP-AND-GRIND HAS ALREADY RESUMED...
LOOKS LIKE A CLASS ACT, MS. NAILS. AREN'T YOU DUE ON-STAGE PRETTY SOON?
I'M GIVING MYSELF THE NIGHT OFF. KEEP WALKING.
LAY OFF ME, THUNDER, OKAY?
CUT OUT THE HEAVY BREATHING, TRUMP. THESE GIRLS AREN'T EXACTLY DRESSED FOR DRAFTS.
WHILE THE EVER-GORGEOUS GLADYS PULLS BACK A HEAVY, DUST-CAKED CURTAIN AT THE FAR END OF THE STAGE, RED NAILS MOTIONS US INTO A HIDDEN ELEVATOR...
GET IN. WE'RE ALL GOING FOR A LITTLE RIDE.
WHERE TO?
WHAT'S IT MATTER? BUT YOU CAN BE SURE IT'LL BE A ONE-WAY TRIP.

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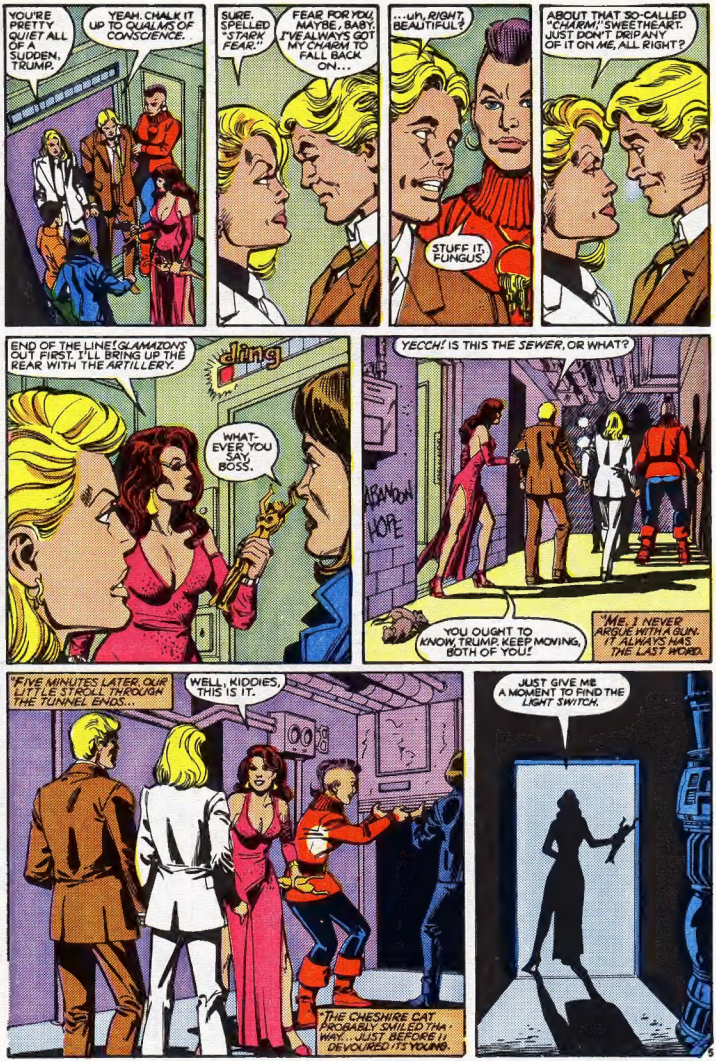
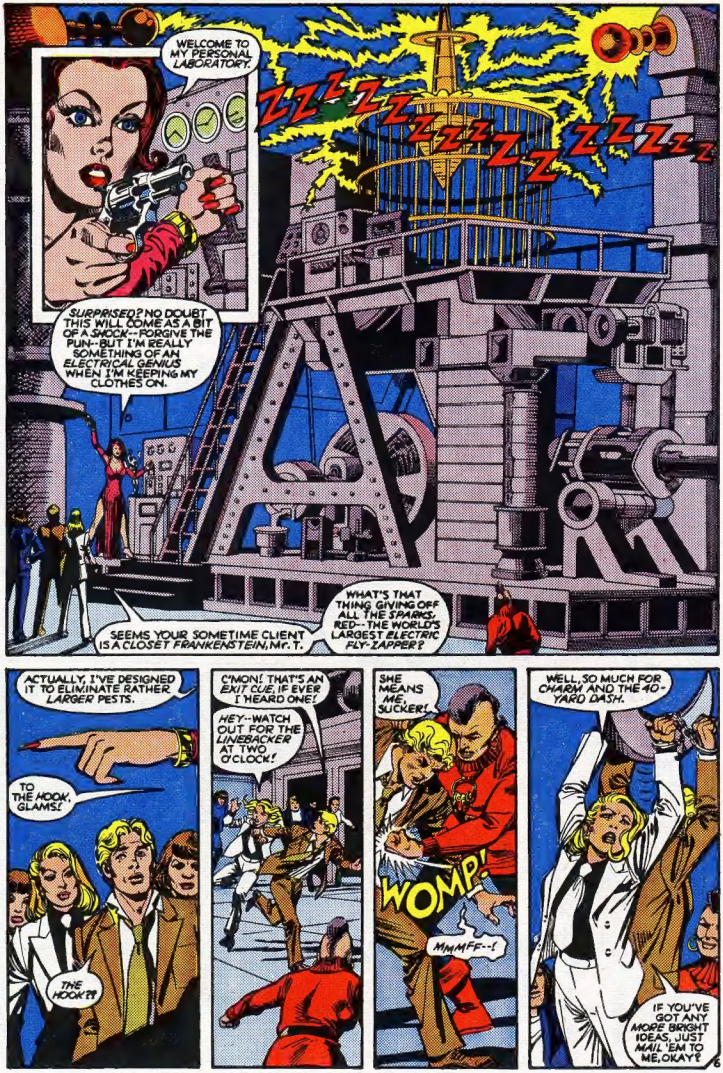
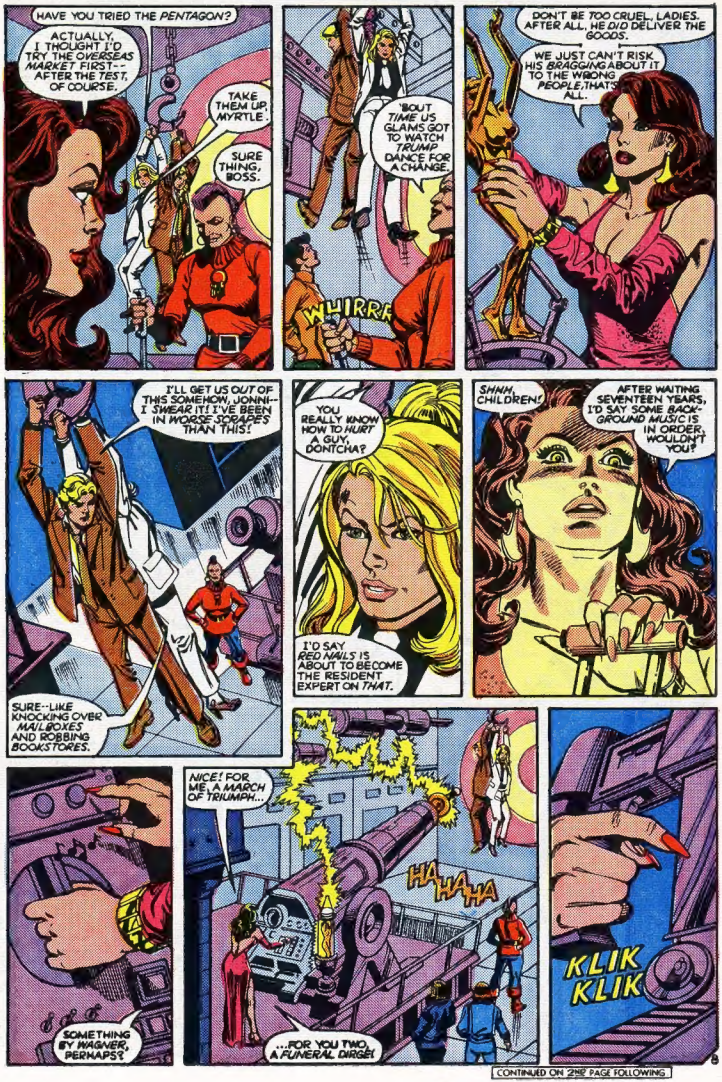

YOU'RE PRETTY QUIET ALL OF A SUDDEN, TRUMP.
YEAH. CHALK IT UP TO QUALMS OF CONSCIENCE.
SURE. SPELLED "STARK FEAR."
FEAR FOR YOU, MAYBE, BABY. I'VE ALWAYS GOT MY CHARM TO FALL BACK ON...
...uh, RIGHT, BEAUTIFUL?
STUFF IT, FUNGUS.
ABOUT THAT SO-CALLED "CHARM," SWEETHEART. JUST DON'T DRIP ANY OF IT ON ME, ALL RIGHT?
END OF THE LINE! GLAMAZON'S OUT FIRST. I'LL BRING UP THE REAR WITH THE ARTILLERY.
ding
WHATEVER YOU SAY, BOSS.
YECCH! IS THIS THE SEWER, OR WHAT?
ABANDON HOPE
YOU OUGHT TO KNOW, TRUMP. KEEP MOVING, BOTH OF YOU!
"ME, I NEVER ARGUE WITH A GUN. IT ALWAYS HAS THE LAST WORD.
"FIVE MINUTES LATER, OUR LITTLE STROLL THROUGH THE TUNNEL ENDS...
WELL, KIDDIES, THIS IS IT.
"THE CHESHIRE CAT PROBABLY SMILED THAT WAY... JUST BEFORE IT DEVOURED ITS YOUNG.
JUST GIVE ME A MOMENT TO FIND THE LIGHT SWITCH.


WELCOME TO MY PERSONAL LABORATORY.
ZZZ

I'M WARNING YOU, RED--THE NAME HARRISON TRUMP STILL MEANS SOMETHING IN THIS TOWN!
ONLY TO YOUR CREDITORS. I CHECKED. NOW, IF YOU'RE ALL THROUGH WHINING--!
MS. THUNDER'S ALREADY LEARNED SOMETHING OF THE STATUE'S POTENTIAL, BUT SINCE YOU'RE THE ONE I HIRED TO STEAL IT FROM HER--
--I THINK I'LL LET YOU IN ON OUR LITTLE SECRET.
DID YOU EVER HEAR OF--NIKOLA TESLA?
UH--SURE! SAX PLAYER WITH BASIE, RIGHT?
HARDLY. HE WAS AN INVENTOR... A GENIUS.
HE WAS GREATER THAN MARCONI!... PERHAPS EVEN GREATER THAN EDISON. HE INVENTED WIRELESS ENERGY TRANSMISSION... ALTERNATING CURRENT...
...AND AN ULTIMATE WEAPON WHICH WAS DESIGNED BUT NEVER BUILT--
--TILL NOW.
I CALL IT THE PLASMONIC GUN.
'N THE PROPER ER SOURCE; IT WILL HURL BALLS OF LIGHTNING TOWARD AN ENEMY LIKE THE PITCHING-ARM OF ZEUS.
AND THIS, FRIENDS, IS THAT POWER SOURCE!
OKAY, SO MY EX-LAMPSTAND CAN GIVE YOU A JOLT.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH A PLAIN OLD WALL SOCKET FOR PLUGGING IN YOUR LITTLE SCIENCE PROJECT?
PORTABILITY, AMONG OTHER THINGS. A GUN IS NOT A HAIR-DRYER, YOU KNOW.
I KNOW OF NO GOVERNMENT OR TERRORIST GROUP WILLING TO PAY ME MILLIONS--
--FOR A WEAPON THAT REQUIRES A THOUSAND MILES OF EXTENSION CORD, DO YOU?


HAVE YOU TRIED THE PENTAGON?
ACTUALLY, I THOUGHT I'D TRY THE OVERSEAS MARKET FIRST--AFTER THE TEST, OF COURSE.
TAKE THEM UP, MYRTLE.
SURE THING, BOSS.
'BOUT TIME US GLAMS GOT TO WATCH TRUMP DANCE FOR A CHANGE.
WHIRR
DON'T BE TOO CRUEL, LADIES. AFTER ALL, HE DID DELIVER THE GOODS.
WE JUST CAN'T RISK HIS BRAGGING ABOUT IT TO THE WRONG PEOPLE, THAT'S ALL.
I'LL GET US OUT OF THIS SOMEHOW, JONNI--I SWEAR IT! I'VE BEEN IN WORSE SCRAPES THAN THIS!
SURE--LIKE KNOCKING OVER MAILBOXES AND ROBBING BOOKSTORES.
YOU REALLY KNOW HOW TO HURT A GUY, DONTCHA?
I'D SAY RED NAILS IS ABOUT TO BECOME THE RESIDENT EXPERT ON THAT.
SHHH, CHILDREN!
AFTER WAITING SEVENTEEN YEARS, I'D SAY SOME BACKGROUND MUSIC IS IN ORDER, WOULDN'T YOU?
SOMETHING BY WAGNER, PERHAPS?
NICE! FOR ME, A MARCH OF TRIUMPH...
HA HA HA
...FOR YOU TWO, A FUNERAL DIRGE!
KLIK KLIK

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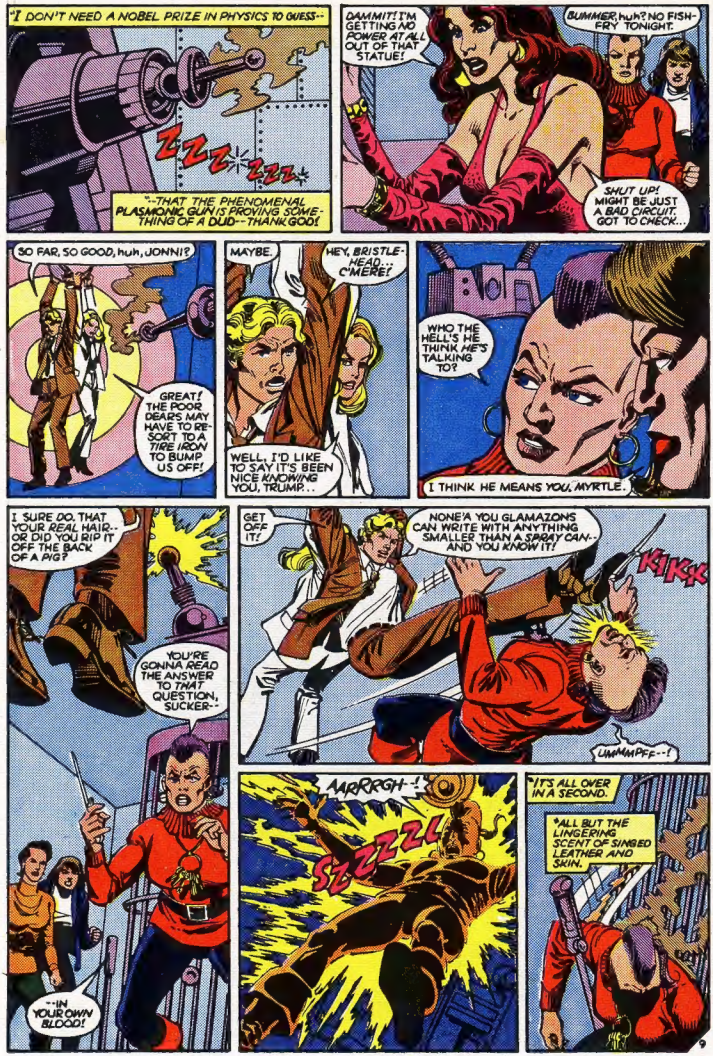
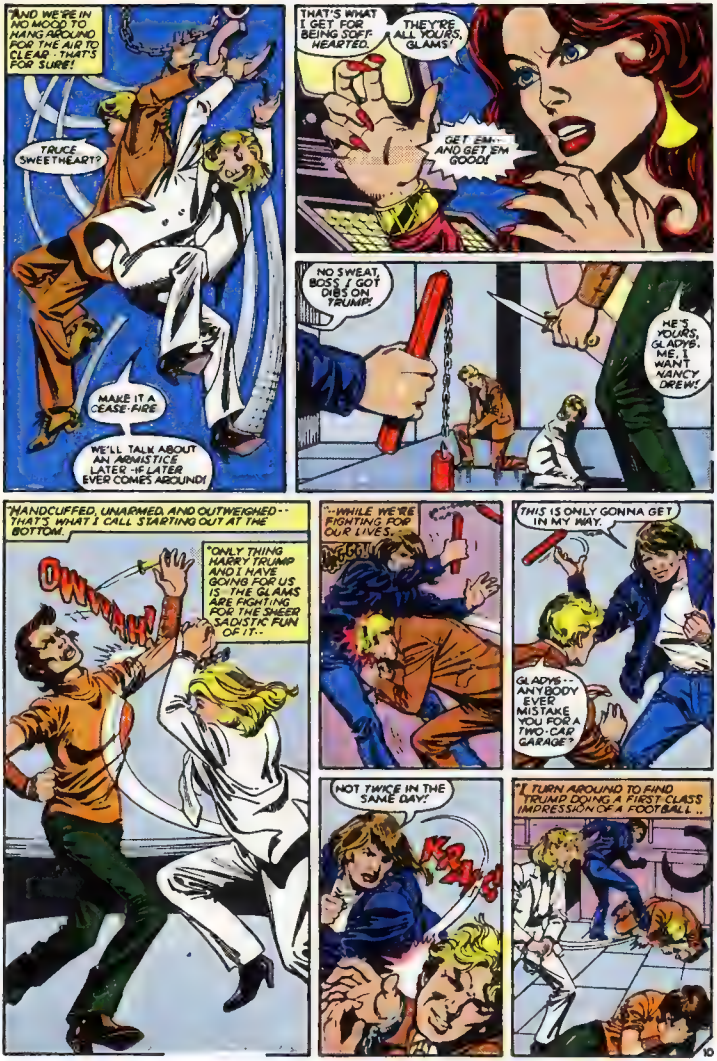

*I DON'T NEED A NOBEL PRIZE IN PHYSICS TO GUESS--
ZZZ ZZZ
--THAT THE PHENOMENAL PLASMONIC GUN IS PROVING SOMETHING OF A DUD--THANK GOD!
DAMMIT! I'M GETTING NO POWER AT ALL OUT OF THAT STATUE!
BUMMER, huh? NO FISH-FRY TONIGHT.
SHUT UP! MIGHT BE JUST A BAD CIRCUIT. GOT TO CHECK..
SO FAR, SO GOOD, huh, JONNI?
GREAT! THE POOR DEARS MAY HAVE TO RESORT TO A TIRE IRON TO BUMP US OFF!
MAYBE.
HEY, BRISTLE-HEAD.. C'MERE!
WELL, I'D LIKE TO SAY IT'S BEEN NICE KNOWING YOU, TRUMP..
BLOG
WHO THE HELL'S HE THINK HE'S TALKING TO?
I THINK HE MEANS YOU, MYRTLE..
I SURE DO. THAT YOUR REAL HAIR.. OR DID YOU RIP IT OFF THE BACK OF A PIG?
YOU'RE GONNA READ THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION, SUCKER--
--IN YOUR OWN BLOOD!
GET OFF IT!
NONE'A YOU GLAMAZONS CAN WRITE WITH ANYTHING SMALLER THAN A SPRAY CAN-- AND YOU KNOW IT!
KIKK
UHMMPFF--!
AARRRGH--!
SIZZZZ
*IT'S ALL OVER IN A SECOND.
*ALL BUT THE LINGERING SCENT OF SINGED LEATHER AND SKIN.


AND WE'RE IN NO MOOD TO HANG AROUND FOR THE AIR TO CLEAR - THAT'S FOR SURE!
TRUCE SWEETHEART?
MAKE IT A CEASE-FIRE
WE'LL TALK ABOUT AN ARMISTICE LATER - IF LATER EVER COMES AROUND!
THAT'S WHAT I GET FOR BEING SOFT-HEARTED.
THEY'RE ALL YOURS, GLAMS!
GET 'EM-- AND GET 'EM GOOD!
NO SWEAT, BOSS! I GOT DIBS ON TRUMP!
HE'S YOURS, GLADYS. ME, I WANT NANCY DREW!
"HANDCUFFED, UNARMED, AND OUTWEIGHED-- THAT'S WHAT I CALL STARTING OUT AT THE BOTTOM.
OWWWAH!
"ONLY THING HARRY TRUMP AND I HAVE GOING FOR US IS THE GLAMS ARE FIGHTING FOR THE SHEER SADISTIC FUN OF IT--
--WHILE WE'RE FIGHTING FOR OUR LIVES.
THIS IS ONLY GONNA GET IN MY WAY.
GLADYS-- ANYBODY EVER MISTAKE YOU FOR A TWO-CAR GARAGE?
NOT TWICE IN THE SAME DAY!
KA-AH-S
"I TURN AROUND TO FIND TRUMP DOING A FIRST CLASS IMPRESSION OF A FOOTBALL..

"...AND IT'S PRETTY CLEAR FROM WHERE I STAND THAT SWEET GLADYS WON'T STOP TILL SHE'S BOOTED HIM FOR A FIELD GOAL.

"I NEVER COULD STAND A BULLY--

AAGGH!

KLANGK

"--EVEN WHEN SHE'S BEATING UP ON SOMEBODY I DON'T ESPECIALLY LIKE.

TH-THANKS, KID. I OWE YOU ONE.

FORGET IT, TRUMP...

...I HEAR YOU'VE GOT ENOUGH CREDITORS ALREADY.

CLICK

BESIDES, WHAT YOU REALLY OWE ME--

--IS SOMETHING I'M GOING BACK TO GET ALL BY MYSELF, RIGHT NOW--

--MY STATUE!

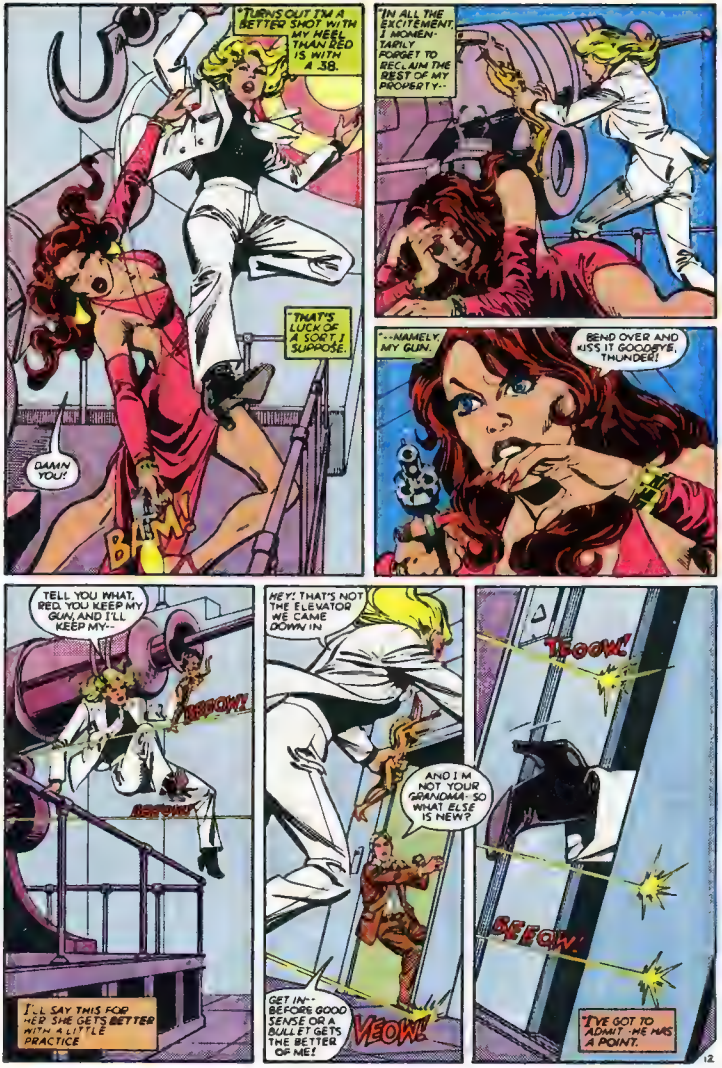
LIKE HELL YOU ARE!

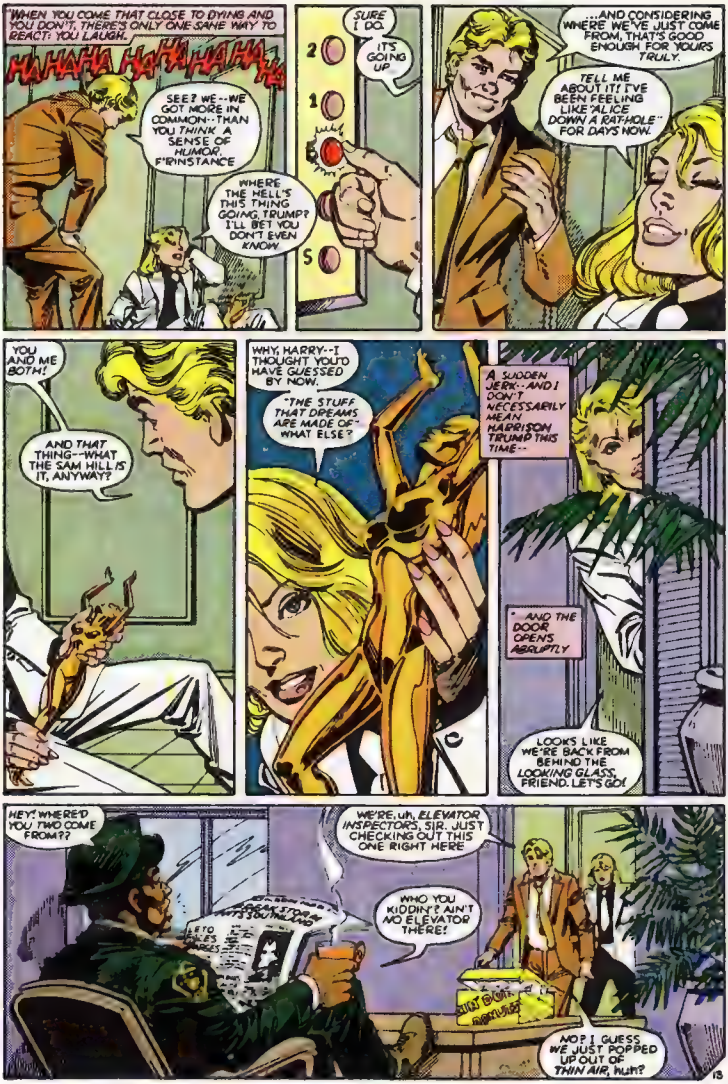
BLAM

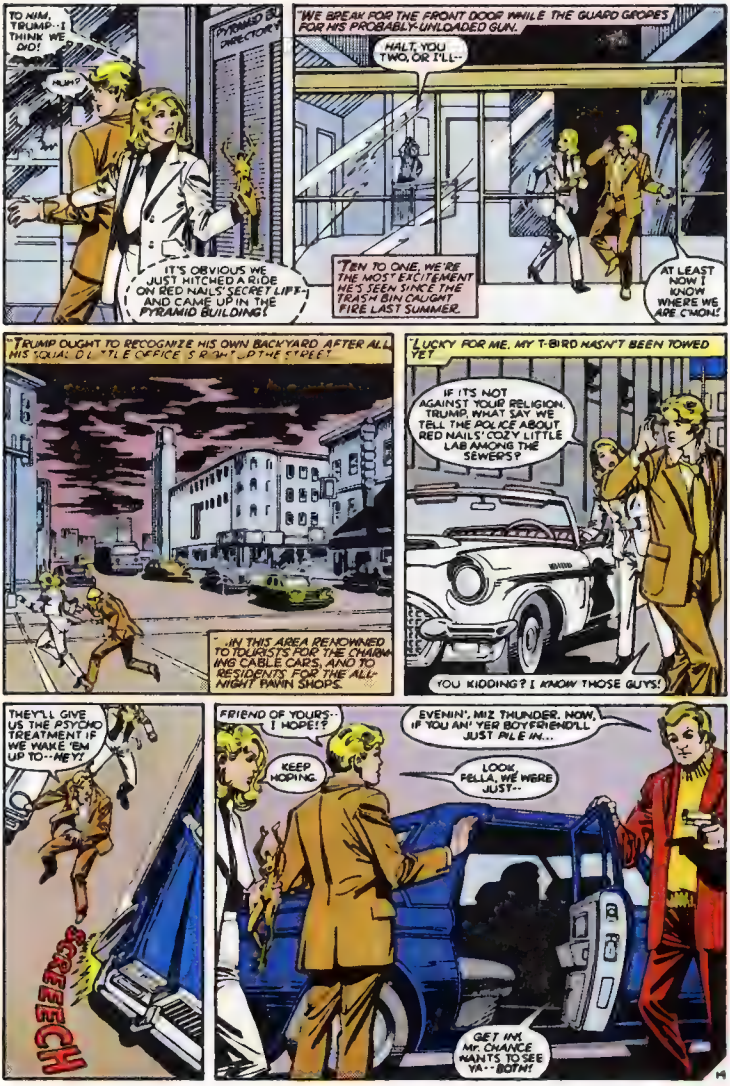
YOU SURE GOT A FULL QUOTA OF GUTS, JONNI.

UH--I'LL MEET YOU OUTSIDE.

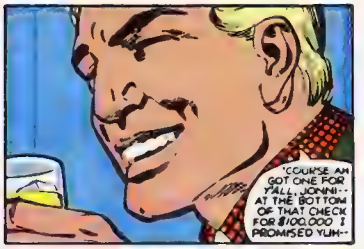
AND--GOOD LUCK!

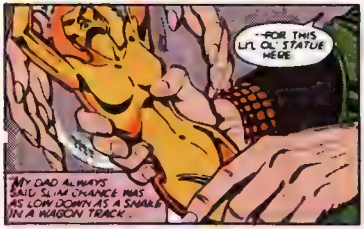

"TURNS OUT I'M A BETTER SHOT WITH MY HEEL THAN RED IS WITH A .38.
"THAT'S LUCK OF A SORT, I SUPPOSE.
DAMN YOU!
BAM!
IN ALL THE EXCITEMENT, I MOMENTARILY FORGET TO RECLAIM THE REST OF MY PROPERTY--
--NAMELY, MY GUN.
BEND OVER AND KISS IT GOODBYE, THUNDER!
TELL YOU WHAT, RED. YOU KEEP MY GUN, AND I'LL KEEP MY--
KERPOW!
KERPOW!
I'LL SAY THIS FOR HER SHE GETS BETTER WITH A LITTLE PRACTICE
HEY! THAT'S NOT THE ELEVATOR WE CAME DOWN IN
AND I'M NOT YOUR GRANDMA! SO WHAT ELSE IS NEW?
GET IN-- BEFORE GOOD SENSE OR A BULLET GETS THE BETTER OF ME!
VEOW!
TSOOK!
SEEOW!
"I'VE GOT TO ADMIT--HE HAS A POINT.

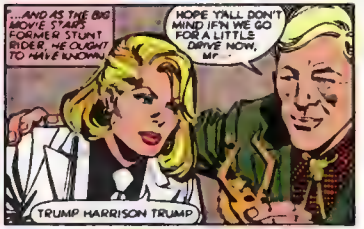

"WHEN YOU COME THAT CLOSE TO DYING AND YOU DON'T, THERE'S ONLY ONE SANE WAY TO REACT: YOU LAUGH.
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
SEE? WE--WE GOT MORE IN COMMON--THAN YOU THINK. A SENSE OF HUMOR, F'RINSTANCE
WHERE THE HELL'S THIS THING GOING, TRUMP? I'LL BET YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW
SURE I DO.
IT'S GOING UP
2
1
5
...AND CONSIDERING WHERE WE'VE JUST COME FROM, THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR YOURS TRULY.
TELL ME ABOUT IT! I'VE BEEN FEELING LIKE "ALICE DOWN A RAT-HOLE" FOR DAYS NOW.
YOU AND ME BOTH!
AND THAT THING--WHAT THE SAM HILL IS IT, ANYWAY?
WHY, HARRY--I THOUGHT YOU'D HAVE GUESSED BY NOW.
"THE STUFF THAT DREAMS ARE MADE OF". WHAT ELSE?
A SUDDEN JERK--AND I DON'T NECESSARILY MEAN HARRISON TRUMP THIS TIME--
"AND THE DOOR OPENS ABRUPTLY
LOOKS LIKE WE'RE BACK FROM BEHIND THE LOOKING GLASS, FRIEND. LET'S GO!
HEY! WHERE'D YOU TWO COME FROM??
WE'RE, uh, ELEVATOR INSPECTORS, SIR. JUST CHECKING OUT THIS ONE RIGHT HERE
WHO YOU KIDDIN'? AIN'T NO ELEVATOR THERE!
NOP. I GUESS WE JUST POPPED UP OUT OF THIN AIR, HUH?

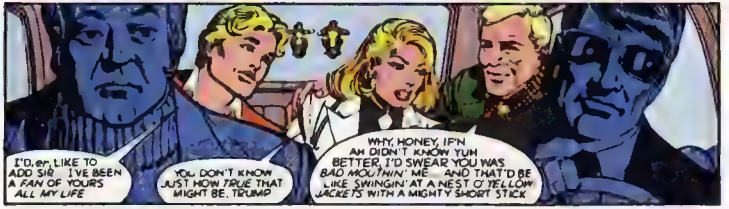

TO HIM, TRUMP--I THINK WE DID!
PYRAMID DIRECTORY
HUH?
IT'S OBVIOUS WE JUST HITCHED A RIDE ON RED NAILS' SECRET LIFT-- AND CAME UP IN THE PYRAMID BUILDING!
WE BREAK FOR THE FRONT DOOR WHILE THE GUARD GROPES FOR HIS PROBABLY-UNLOADED GUN.
HALT, YOU TWO, OR I'LL--
TEN TO ONE, WE'RE THE MOST EXCITEMENT HE'S SEEN SINCE THE TRASH BIN CAUGHT FIRE LAST SUMMER.
AT LEAST NOW I KNOW WHERE WE ARE C'MON!
TRUMP OUGHT TO RECOGNIZE HIS OWN BACKYARD AFTER ALL HIS SOCIAL CLIMBING! THE OFFICE SPRAWL OF THE STREET
--IN THIS AREA RENOWNED TO TOURISTS FOR THE CHARMING CABLE CARS, AND TO RESIDENTS FOR THE ALL-NIGHT PAWN SHOPS.
LUCKY FOR ME, MY T-BIRD HASN'T BEEN TOWED YET
IF IT'S NOT AGAINST YOUR RELIGION, TRUMP, WHAT SAY WE TELL THE POLICE ABOUT RED NAILS' COZY LITTLE LAB AMONG THE SEWERS?
YOU KIDDING? I KNOW THOSE GUYS!
THEY'LL GIVE US THE PSYCHO TREATMENT IF WE WAKE 'EM UP TO--HEY!
SCREECH
FRIEND OF YOURS-- I HOPE!?
KEEP HOPING.
EVENIN', MIZ THUNDER. NOW, IF YOU AN' YER BOYFRIEND'LL JUST PILE IN...
LOOK, FELLA, WE WERE JUST--
GET IN! Mr. CHANCE WANTS TO SEE YA-- BOTH!

NOT SLIM CHANCE--THE SINGING COWBOY TURNED TV TYCOON?
WHY DON'T YOU ASK FOR HIS AUTOGRAPH WHILE YOU'RE AT IT?
LATER, IF YUH DON'T MIND


'COURSE AM GOT ONE FOR Y'ALL, JONNI--AT THE BOTTOM OF THAT CHECK FOR $100,000 I PROMISED YUH--


--FOR THIS LI'L OL' STATUE HERE
MY DAD ALWAYS SAID SLIM CHANCE WAS AS LOW DOWN AS A SNAKE IN A WAGON TRACK.

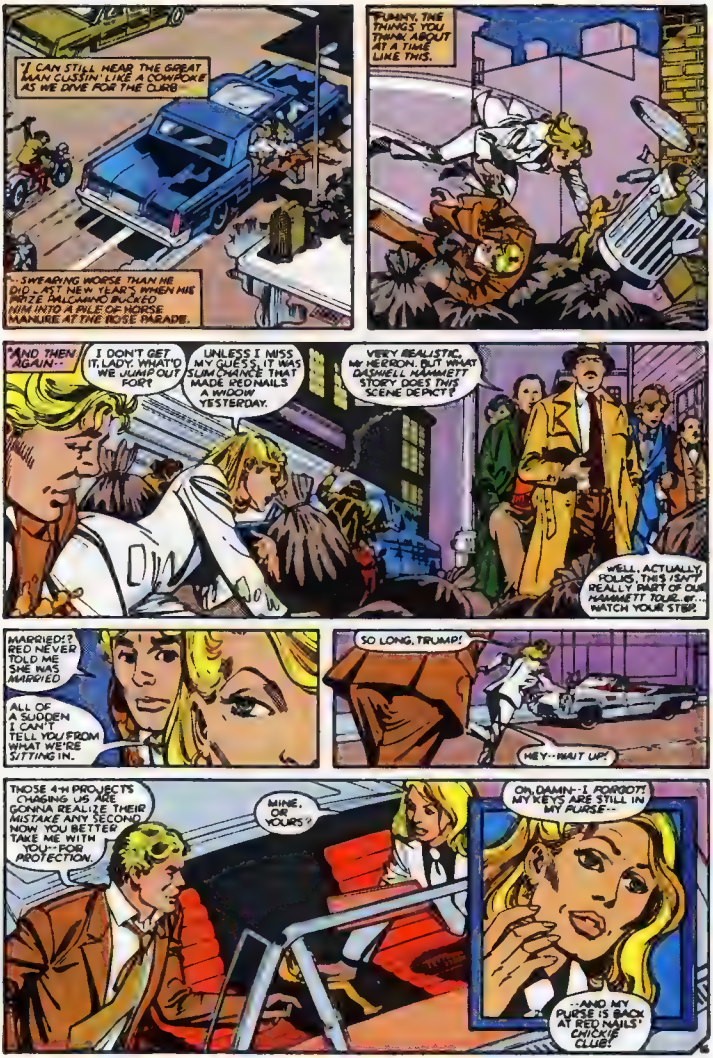

...AND AS THE BIG MOVIE STARS FORMER STUNT RIDER, HE OUGHT TO HAVE KNOWN--
HOPE Y'ALL DON'T MIND IF'N WE GO FOR A LITTLE DRIVE NOW, MR.--
TRUMP HARRISON TRUMP

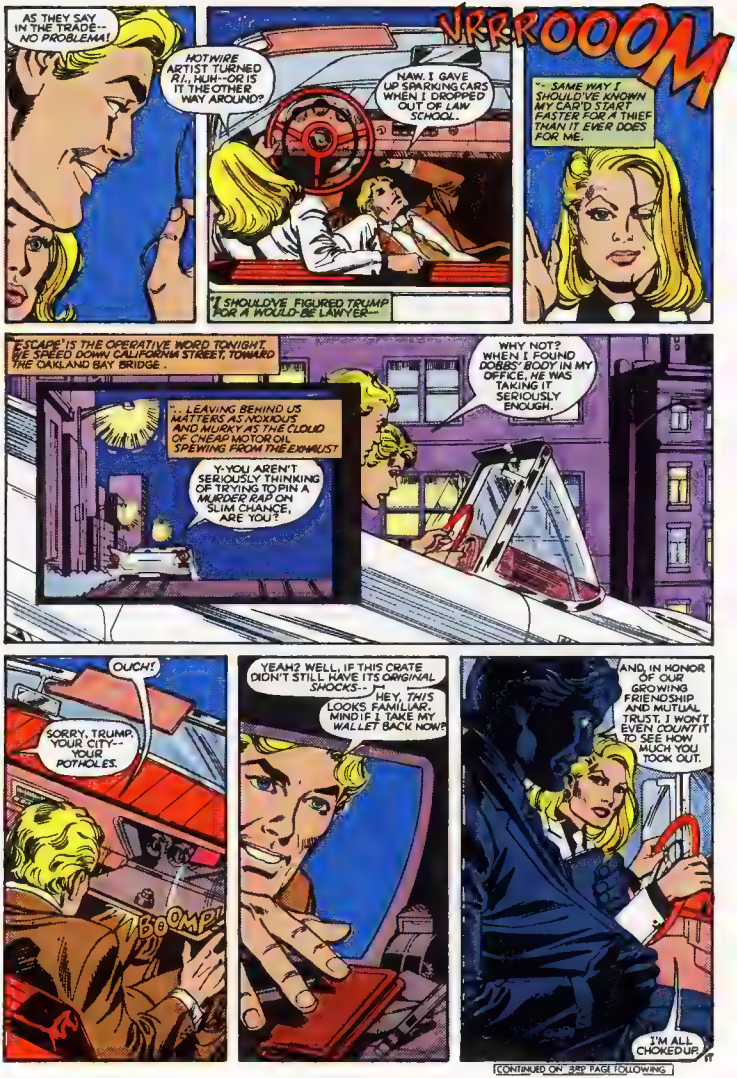

I'D, er, LIKE TO ADD SIR I'VE BEEN A FAN OF YOURS ALL MY LIFE
YOU DON'T KNOW JUST HOW TRUE THAT MIGHT BE, TRUMP
WHY, HONEY, IF'N AH DIDN'T KNOW YUH BETTER, I'D SWEAR YOU WAS BAD MOUTHIN' ME AND THAT'D BE LIKE SWINGIN' AT A NEST O' YELLOW JACKETS WITH A MIGHTY SHORT STICK

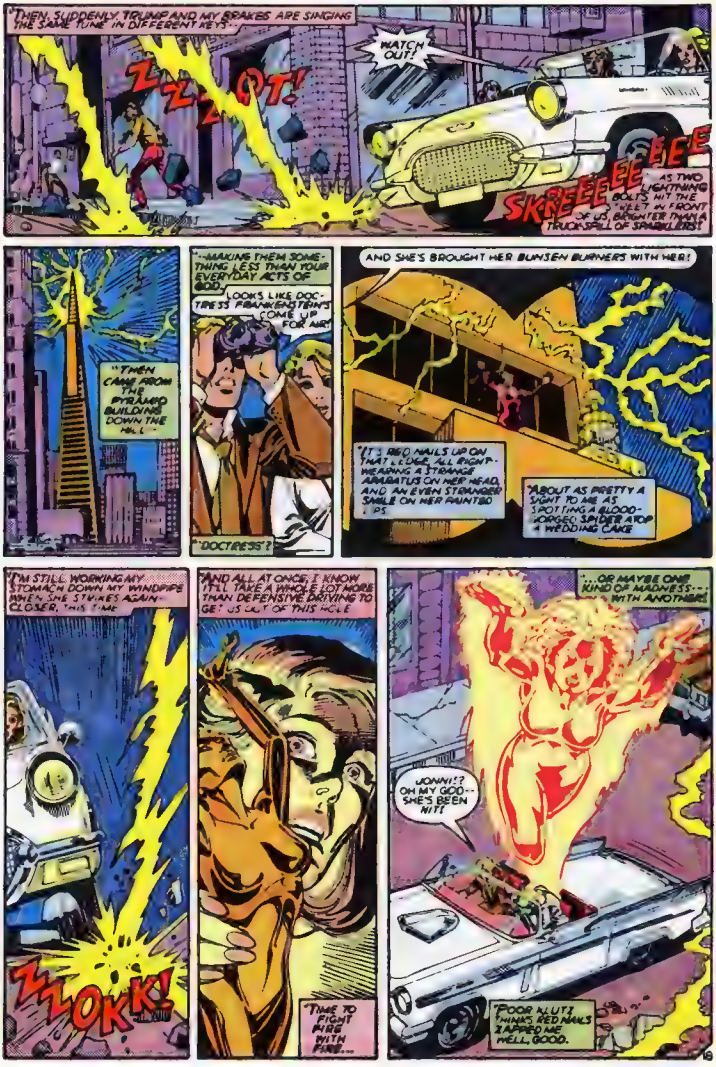
BETTER MAKE THAT LEATHER JACKETS SLIM.
TWO OF RED'S HUMAN HANGNAILS COMING UP BEHIND US--FAST.

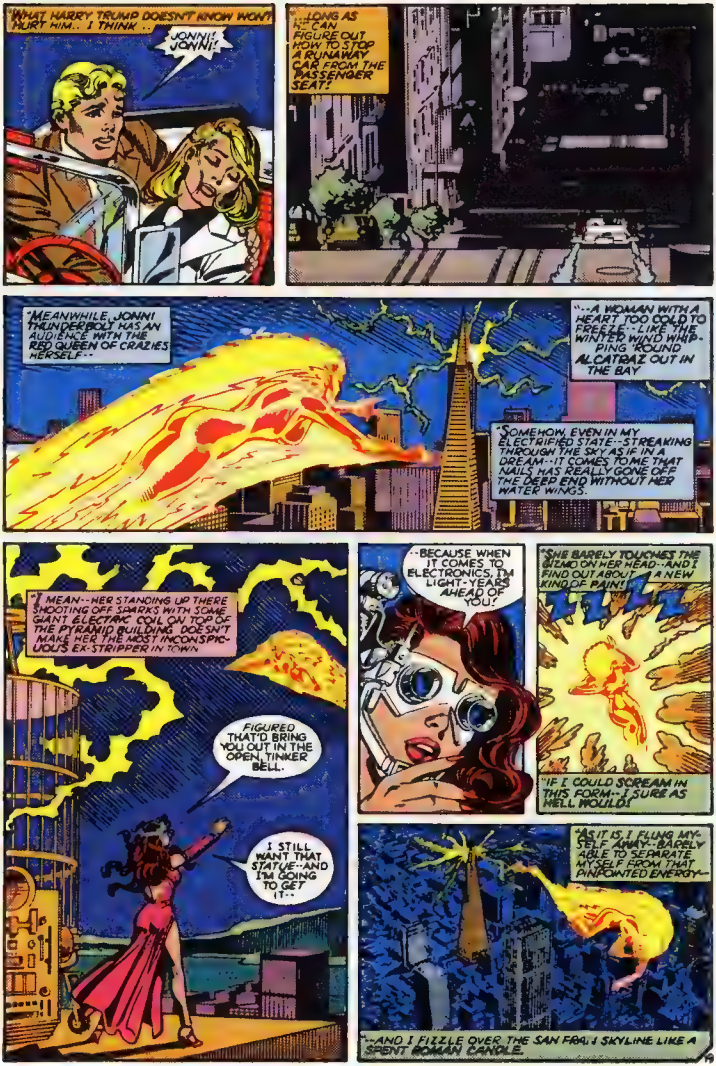
GLAMAZON'S AT SIX O'CLOCK, TRUMP. TIME TO BAIL OUT.
ARE YOU CRAZY?
DON'T ARGUE WITH ME--

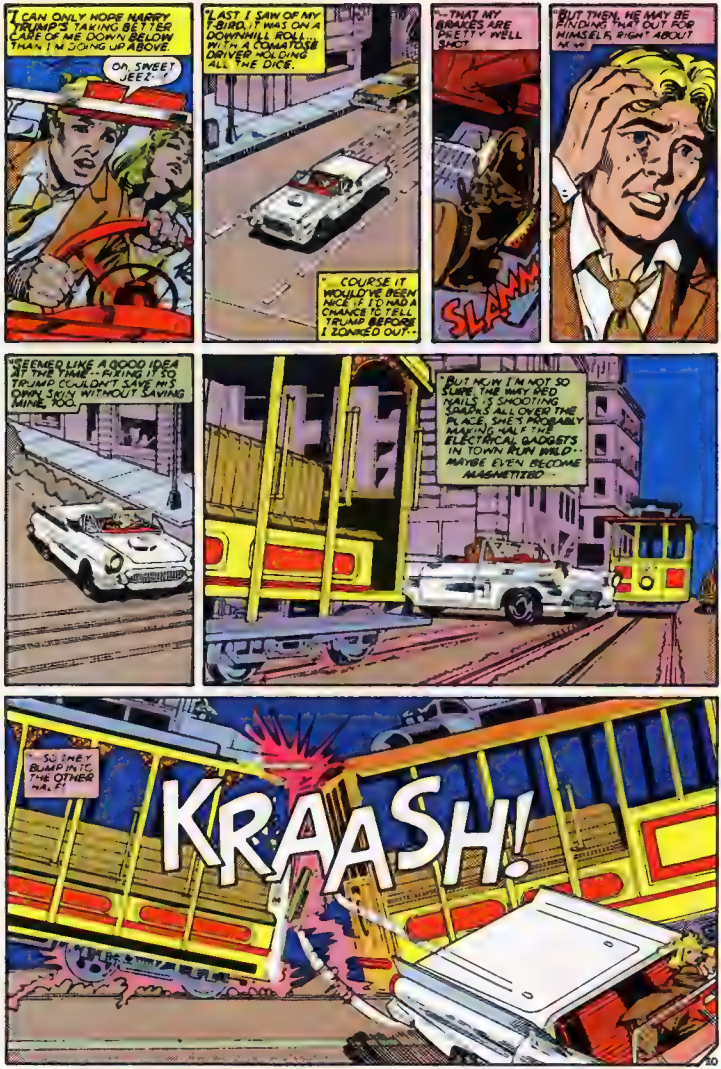
JUST OPEN THE DAMNED DOOR--AND JUMP!
THE STATUE!


"I CAN STILL HEAR THE GREAT MAN CUSSIN' LIKE A COWPOKE AS WE DIVE FOR THE CURB
"...SWEARING WORSE THAN HE DID AT NEW YEAR'S WHEN HIS PRIZE DALMATIAN BUCKED HIM INTO A PILE OF HORSE MANURE AT THE ROSE PARADE.
"FUNNY, THE THINGS YOU THINK ABOUT AT A TIME LIKE THIS.
"AND, THEN AGAIN--
I DON'T GET IT, LADY. WHAT'D WE JUMP OUT FOR?
UNLESS I MISS MY GUESS, IT WAS SLIM CHANCE THAT MADE RED NAILS A WIDOW YESTERDAY.
VERY REALISTIC, MR. HERRON. BUT WHAT DASHIELL HAMMETT STORY DOES THIS SCENE DEPICT?
WELL, ACTUALLY, FOLKS, THIS ISN'T REALLY PART OF OUR HAMMETT TOUR, SO... WATCH YOUR STEP!
MARRIED!? RED NEVER TOLD ME SHE WAS MARRIED
ALL OF A SUDDEN I CAN'T TELL YOU FROM WHAT WE'RE SITTING IN.
SO LONG, TRUMP!
HEY--WAIT UP!
THOSE 4-H PROJECTS CHASING US ARE GONNA REALIZE THEIR MISTAKE ANY SECOND. NOW YOU BETTER TAKE ME WITH YOU--FOR PROTECTION.
MINE, OR YOURS?
OH, DAMN--I FORGOT! MY KEYS ARE STILL IN MY PURSE--
...AND MY PURSE IS BACK AT RED NAILS' CHICK'E CLUB!


AS THEY SAY IN THE TRADE-- NO PROBLEMA!
HOTWIRE ARTIST TURNED R.I. HUH--OR IS IT THE OTHER WAY AROUND?
VRRROOOM
NAW. I GAVE UP SPARKING CARS WHEN I DROPPED OUT OF LAW SCHOOL.
-- SAME WAY I SHOULD'VE KNOWN MY CAR'D START FASTER FOR A THIEF THAN IT EVER DOES FOR ME.
"I SHOULDVE FIGURED TRUMP FOR A WOULD-BE LAWYER--
"ESCAPE" IS THE OPERATIVE WORD TONIGHT. WE SPEED DOWN CALIFORNIA STREET, TOWARD THE OAKLAND BAY BRIDGE.
.. LEAVING BEHIND US MATTERS AS NOXIOUS AND MURKY AS THE CLOUD OF CHEAP MOTOR OIL SPEWING FROM THE EXHAUST
Y-YOU AREN'T SERIOUSLY THINKING OF TRYING TO PIN A MURDER RAP ON SLIM CHANCE, ARE YOU?
WHY NOT? WHEN I FOUND DOBBS' BODY IN MY OFFICE, ME WAS TAKING IT SERIOUSLY ENOUGH.
OUCH!
SORRY, TRUMP. YOUR CITY-- YOUR POTHOLES.
BOOMP!
YEAH? WELL, IF THIS CRATE DIDN'T STILL HAVE ITS ORIGINAL SHOCKS--
HEY, THIS LOOKS FAMILIAR. MIND IF I TAKE MY WALLET BACK NOW?
AND, IN HONOR OF OUR GROWING FRIENDSHIP AND MUTUAL TRUST, I WON'T EVEN COUNT IT TO SEE HOW MUCH YOU TOOK OUT.
I'M ALL CHOKED UP.
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING


"THEN SUDDENLY TRUMP AND MY BRAKES ARE SINGING THE SAME TUNE IN DIFFERENT KEYS--"
ZZZZOT!
WATCH OUT!
SKREEEEEEEE
AS TWO LIGHTNING BOLTS HIT THE TOILET IN FRONT OF US, BRIGHTER THAN A TRUCKFULL OF SPARKLERS!
"THEN CAME FROM THE PYRAMID BUILDING DOWN THE HILL--"
"--MAKING THEM SOMETHING LESS THAN YOUR EVERY-DAY ACTS OF GOD!"
LOOKS LIKE DOCTRESS FRANKENSTRING'S COME UP FOR AIR!
"DOCTRESS?"
AND SHE'S BROUGHT HER BUNSEN BURNERS WITH HER!
"IT'S RED NAILS UP ON THAT LEDGE, ALL RIGHT--WEARING A STORAGE APPARATUS ON HER HEAD, AND AN EVEN STRANGER SMILE ON HER PAINTED LIPS.
"ABOUT AS PRETTY A SIGHT TO ME AS SPOTTING A BLOOD-SORREL SPIDER ATOP A WEDDING CAKE
"I'M STILL WORKING MY STOMACH DOWN MY WINDPIPE WHEN SHE STRIKES AGAIN--CLOSER, THIS TIME
ZZZOKK!
"AND ALL AT ONCE, I KNOW IT'LL TAKE A WHOLE LOT MORE THAN DEFENSIVE DRIVING TO GET US OUT OF THIS HOLE
"TIME TO FIGHT FIRE WITH FIRE--
"--OR MAYBE ONE KIND OF MADNESS--WITH ANOTHER!
JONNI!? OH MY GOD--SHE'S BEEN HIT!
"POOR KLUT, THINKS RED NAILS ZAPPED ME WELL, GOOD.
16


WHAT HARRY TRUMP DOESN'T KNOW WON'T HURT HIM.. I THINK ..
JONN!! JONN!!
..LONG AS I CAN FIGURE OUT HOW TO STOP A RUNAWAY CAR FROM THE PASSENGER SEAT!
MEANWHILE, JONN! THUNDERBOLT HAS AN AUDIENCE WITH THE RED QUEEN OF CRAZIES HERSELF--
..A WOMAN WITH A HEART SO COLD TO FREEZE--LIKE THE WINTER WIND WHIPPING 'ROUND ALCATRAZ OUT IN THE BAY
SOMEHOW, EVEN IN MY ELECTRIFIED STATE--STREAKING THROUGH THE SKY AS IF IN A DREAM--IT COMES TO ME THAT NAILS HAS REALLY GONE OFF THE DEEP END WITHOUT HER WATER WINGS.
I MEAN--HER STANDING UP THERE SHOOTING OFF SPARKS WITH SOME GIANT ELECTRIC COIL ON TOP OF THE PYRAMID BUILDING DOESN'T MAKE HER THE MOST INCONSPICUOUS EX-STRIPPER IN TOWN.
FIGURED THAT'D BRING YOU OUT IN THE OPEN, TINKER BELL.
I STILL WANT THAT STATUE--AND I'M GOING TO GET IT--
--BECAUSE WHEN IT COMES TO ELECTRONICS, I'M LIGHT-YEARS AHEAD OF YOU!
SHE BARELY TOUCHES THE GIZMO ON HER HEAD--AND I FIND OUT ABOUT A NEW KIND OF PAIN!
ZZZZZ
IF I COULD SCREAM IN THIS FORM--I SURE AS WELL WOULD!
AS IT IS, I FLUNG MYSELF AWAY--BARELY ABLE TO SEPARATE MYSELF FROM THAT PINPOINTED ENERGY--
--AND I FIZZLE OVER THE SAN FRAN SKYLINE LIKE A SPENT ROMAN CANDLE.


I CAN ONLY HOPE MARRY TRUMP'S TAKING BETTER CARE OF ME DOWN BELOW THAN I'M DOING UP ABOVE.
OH, SWEET JEEZ--!
LAST I SAW OF MY T-BIRD, IT WAS ON A DOWNHILL ROLL... WITH A COMATOSE DRIVER HOLDING ALL THE DICE.
--COURSE IT WOULDVE BEEN NICE IF I'D HAD A CHANCE TO TELL TRUMP BEFORE I ZONKED OUT--
--THAT MY BRAKES ARE PRETTY WELL SHOT
SLAMM
BUT THEN, HE MAY BE FINDING THAT OUT FOR HIMSELF, RIGHT ABOUT NOW--
"SEEMED LIKE A GOOD IDEA AT THE TIME--FIXING IT SO TRUMP COULDN'T SAVE HIS OWN SKIN WITHOUT SAVING MINE, TOO
BUT NOW I'M NOT SO SURE. THE WAY HED NAILS IS SHOOTING SPARKS ALL OVER THE PLACE. SHE'S PROBABLY MAKING HALF THE ELECTRICAL GADGETS IN TOWN RUN WILD-- MAYBE EVEN BECOME MAGNETIZED--
--SO THEY BUMP INTO THE OTHER HALF!
KRAASH!

ANYWAY IF AND WHEN HE DOES MANAGE TO GET MY WHEELS UNDER HIM HOPE HE DOESN'T HAVE TOO MANY QUALMS ABOUT TAKING OFF WITH IT
WHOM I TRYING TO KID? I'LL BE LUCKY IF HE DOESN'T TOSS ME THUNDER IN THE NEAREST TRASHCAN
BUT MAYBE I'M BEING TOO HARD ON HIM. SURE HARRY TRUMAN MAY NOT BE AS HONEST AS THE DAY IS LONG, BUT SOMETHING TELLS ME HE MIGHT JUST MAKE THE SHORT NIGHT WORTH WAITING FOR
NOW WHAT BROUGHT THAT ON? THIS IS SERIOUS
IT JUST OCCURS TO ME THAT BY NOW I'D'VE GOT US HALFWAY TO OAKLAND, 'CAUSE NOW THAT WE'VE CLEARED SHEET OF FOG
--SHE'LL GO FOR THAT STATUE LIKE A SHARK AFTER ITS "AT" MEAL!
ZZOK!
WISH I COULD HELP OUT. IT'S ALL THIS FIZZLEBEE THUNDERBOLT CAN DO TO TRY FOR A BALCONY SEAT FROM WHICH TO WATCH HER OWN SMUFF FILM
"LEAST OF ALL MINE!
MY MOLLUSKS IN FRONT OF ME LOOK LIKE THE WORLD'S BIGGEST HOSE, SO--
"SURE! IT'S THE COIT TOWER! NO VISIT TO SAN FRANCISCO WOULD BE COMPLETE WITHOUT IT
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

GUEST MEANWHILE...

BEN ODA REMEMBERED

BY ANDREW HELFER

You probably never thought twice about Ben Oda. He was never interviewed by the fanzines. He was never the guest of honor at a comics convention. Fans never begged him for his autograph. The spotlight never touched him. And there's probably a very good reason for that. Ben Oda was neither writer nor artist nor comic book creator. He was just one of the hundreds of people who put the finishing touches on comics. Ben Oda was, to put it simply, a letterer.

But Ben Oda had a fan club. An exclusive group. We kept its very existence a secret. Instead of calling it "The Ben Oda Fan Club," we called it DC Comics. To us, Ben was not only our favorite comic book letterer; he was also our favorite human being. And when he passed away a few weeks ago, we all became acutely aware of a space in our lives that would never again be filled.

Ben Oda was one of an ever-dwindling group of comic book professionals—the "old timers." He worked on comics in their infancy, through their heyday, and right into the present. In the forties, his distinctive lettering style graced the pages of Jack Kirby's early work. In the fifties, when Harvey Kurtzman needed hand-lettering for his now-famous EC war comics, Ben was the man asked to do it. He was a letterer for the Chicago Tribune and King Features Syndicate, regularly turning out pages of Prince Valiant, Little Orphan Annie, The Phantom, and others too numerous to mention. And until mere days before he left us, Ben was also the most prolific letterer working at DC Comics.

Those are the facts—they're easy to tell. What's harder to explain is the way Ben touched us all—every day of his life.

Among other letterers, Ben was the acknowledged master—I remember Tom Orzekowski's delight over being introduced to him some years ago; and Bob Lappan literally studied Ben's work with a comprehensiveness that Ben found both flattering and confusing. He never quite understood why anyone would give his work a second glance—as far as he was concerned, his job was simply to make the writer and artist look as good as possible.

And that's exactly what Ben did so well—twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, or so it seemed. Ben would come into the DC offices every day at four-thirty in the afternoon (you could set your clock to it) with a staggering number of lettered pages. If you had a book that needed to be lettered overnight, you just gave it to Ben. Truth to tell, we took him for granted. He was the ultimate pinch-hitter, and he got the DC team out of more than one deadline jam. But, like most pinch-hitters, he seldom received the praise he deserved.

And as much as we'd all like to believe otherwise, Ben was no speed demon. He'd work long hours, sit hunched over his drawing board late into the night, all to meet what he undoubtedly felt was a personal commitment to a friend. Sometimes, in his desire to please and help out, he would push himself too far, and the strain would show. Often, the results were hilarious. Once in a while, Batman might "fight a wart on crime," and Superman might be referred to as "The Man of Seel." We'd laugh together over Ben's occasional blooper, and seldom think about the sleepless nights he'd put in just to get the job finished. Again, we took him for granted.

But when the job was finally done, Ben would sit himself down in one editorial office or another and just shoot the breeze. This was where you really got to know and appreciate Ben. He could talk about practically anything—World War II and his time in the service (he was a paratrooper, a spy, and a part-time baseball player), his memories of comic book pros he'd worked with in the past, his family, the performance of various players on his Monday night bowling team, and the current state of the comic book field. All his stories and opinions were delivered with such a keen sense of humor that you couldn't help but laugh.

But there was more to Ben than just that. When Ben told a story, he became a kind of Japanese Will Rogers, a homespun humorist with a shy smile that could melt ice. Dozens of wrinkles etched into his face, laugh lines mingling with the ones that simply come with age, Ben often seemed like an ancient yet humane sage, always aware of the humor in life, and enjoying every minute of it. You had only to talk to Ben to see that this was true. His eyes would sparkle with life, and in an almost mystical transference, our eyes would sparkle too.

And perhaps, when all is said and done, this was the most wonderful thing about Ben—his uncanny ability to make us smile, to make us laugh, to lift us out of our late-afternoon doldrums with a simple anecdote or tall tale—to simply be Ben. These were his gifts to us, these were the things we took for granted, and these are the things we will miss the most.

DC CHECK LIST

ON SALE THE WEEK OF MARCH 7, 1985

☐ **Justice League of America 239:** The origin of Vixen's Tantu totem as she confronts the Ox!

☐ **Crisis on Infinite Earths 3:** The Outsiders! The Teen Titans! Sgt Rock! Legion! Losers! Batman! And ... the death of the Flash?

☐ **DC Comics Presents 82:** Superman meets up with Adam Strange, with art by Klaus Janson!

☐ **Fury of Firestorm 36:** It's Plastique and Killer Frost out for Firestorm's blood!

☐ **Best of DC Digest 61:** The Year's Best Comics including Titans, Swamp Thing, Atari Force, and Green Lantern Corps!

☐ **Atari Force™ 18:** The return of Tempest, plus a Hukka solo feature!

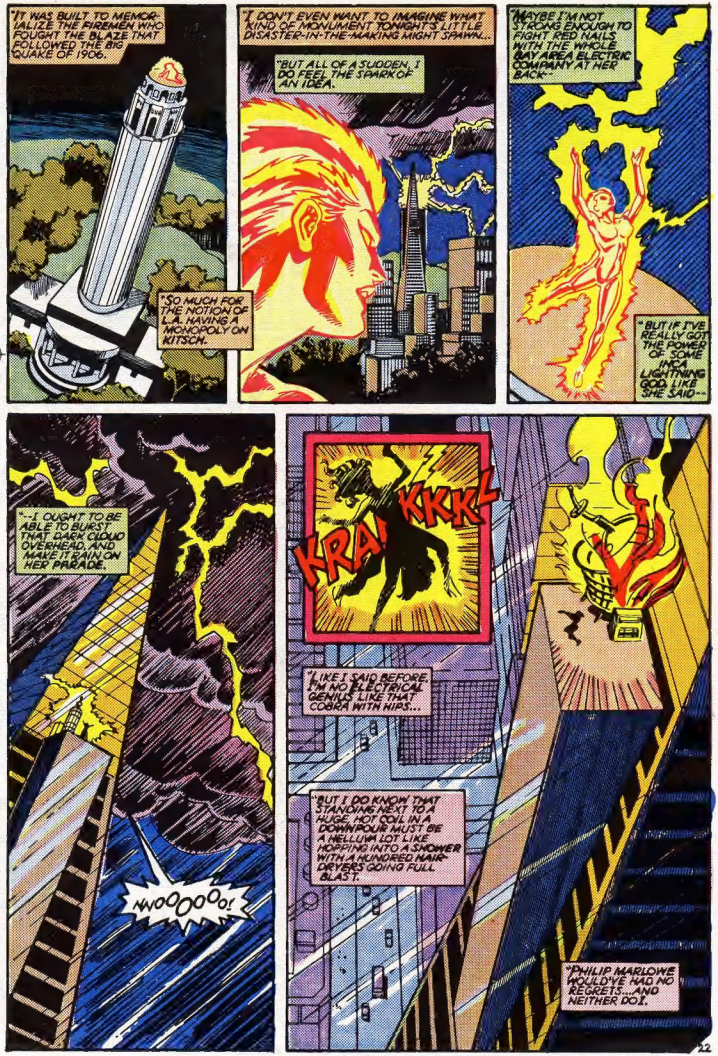
☐ **Shadow War of Hawkman 2:** Hawkman must find the aliens before they can conquer the Earth!

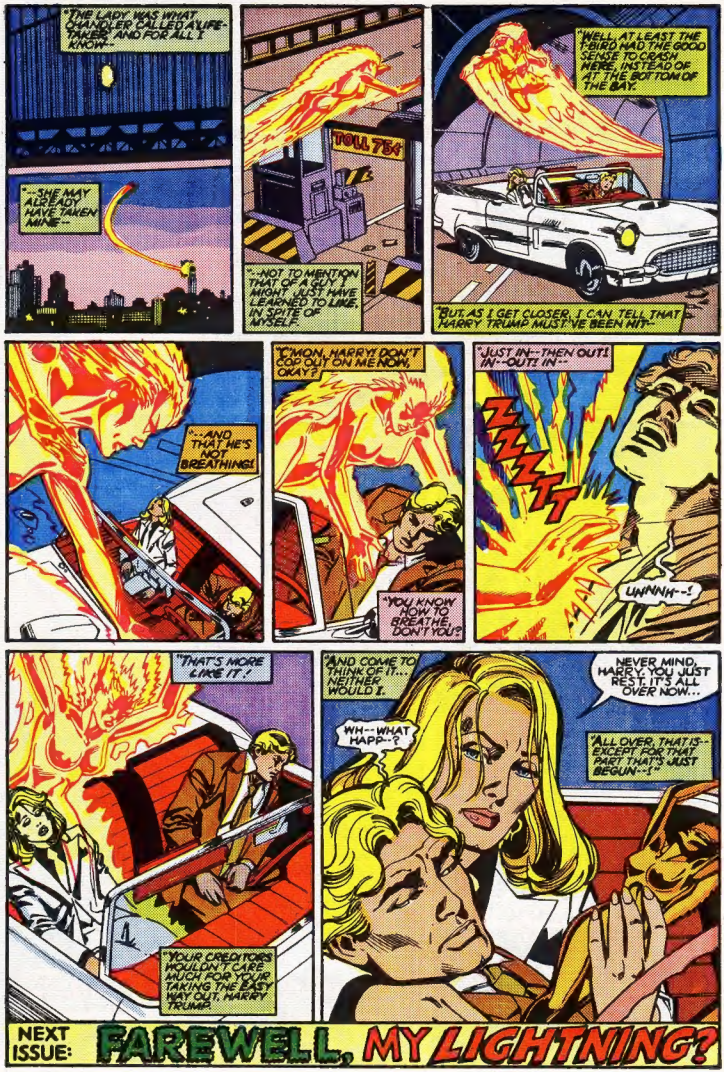
☐ **Tales of the Teen Titans 54:** The Terminator's trial continues.

☐ **Vigilante 18:** The second half of "Father's Day" by Alan Moore and Jim Baikie.

☐ **Deadman 2:** Two full-length tales with startling Neal Adams art!

☐ **Jonni Thunder 3:** Jonni fights for her life high above San Francisco!


"IT WAS BUILT TO MEMORIALIZE THE FIREMEN WHO FOUGHT THE BLAZE THAT FOLLOWED THE BIG QUAKE OF 1906.
"SO MUCH FOR THE NOTION OF L.A. HAVING A MONOPOLY ON KITSCH.
"I DON'T EVEN WANT TO IMAGINE WHAT KIND OF MONUMENT TONIGHT'S LITTLE DISASTER-IN-THE-MAKING MIGHT SPAWN...
"BUT ALL OF A SUDDEN, I DO FEEL THE SPARK OF AN IDEA.
"MAYBE I'M NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO FIGHT RED NAILS WITH THE WHOLE BAY AREA ELECTRIC COMPANY AT HER BACK--
"BUT IF I'VE REALLY GOT THE POWER OF SOME INDRA LIGHTNING GOD LIKE SHE SAID--
"...I OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO BLAST THAT DARK CLOUD OVERHEAD, AND MAKE IT RAIN ON HER PARADE.
WHOOOOOO!
KRA KKKL
"LIKE I SAID BEFORE, I'M NO ELECTRICAL GENIUS LIKE THAT COBRA WITH HIPS...
"BUT I DO KNOW THAT SOMEWHERE NEXT TO A HUGE, HOT COIL IN A DOWNPOUR MUST BE A HELLUVA LOT LIKE HOPPING INTO A SHOWER WITH A HUNDRED HAIR-DRYERS GOING FULL BLAST.
"PHILIP MARLOWE WOULDN'T'VE HAD NO REGRETS...AND NEITHER DO I.


"THE LADY WAS WHAT CHANDLER CALLED A FEMME FATALE... AND FOR ALL I KNOW--
--SHE MAY ALREADY HAVE TAKEN NINE--
TOLL 75¢
--NOT TO MENTION THAT OF A GUY WHO MIGHT JUST HAVE LEARNED TO LIKE, IN SPITE OF MYSELF.
"WELL AT LEAST THE T-BIRD HAD THE GOOD SENSE TO CRASH HERE, INSTEAD OF AT THE BOTTOM OF THE BAY.
"BUT, AS I GET CLOSER, I CAN TELL THAT HARRY TRUMP MUST'VE BEEN HIT--
"--AND THAT HE'S NOT BREATHING!
"C'MON, HARRY! DON'T COP OUT ON ME NOW, OKAY?
"YOU KNOW HOW TO BREATHE, DON'T YOU?
"JUST IN--THEN OUT! IN--OUT! IN--
ZZZZTT
UHNNH--!
"THAT'S MORE LIKE IT!
"YOUR CREDITORS WOULDN'T CARE MUCH FOR YOUR TAKING THE EASY WAY OUT, HARRY TRUMP.
"AND COME TO THINK OF IT... NEITHER WOULD I.
NEVER MIND, HARRY. YOU JUST REST. IT'S ALL OVER NOW...
WH--WHAT HAPP--?
"ALL OVER, THAT IS--EXCEPT FOR THAT PART THAT'S JUST BEGUN--!"
NEXT ISSUE: FAREWELL, MY LIGHTNING?

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SPECIAL NOTE: Because, due to various factors, JONNI THUNDER, A.K.A. THUNDERBOLT had to go bimonthly at the last moment for its four-issue run, we actually have a letters page in this third issue! And we're happy to say that JONNI seems to have proven every bit as popular as we'd hoped it would be. Artist/unindicted co-editor Dick Giordano tells me he practically got writer's cramp autographing copies of #1 at recent conventions, as well.

Before we get around to the letters, though, a few words about the mysterious "Mr. Herron" who pops up this issue, giving a "Dashiel Hammett Tour" in the streets of San Francisco (see p. 16). Yes, there really is such a person, and such a tour, and it's got at least a peripheral connection with the JONNI THUNDER series itself.

Don is a well-known fan of Deshiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler. For the uninitiated, Hammett is the author of **The Maltese Falcon, The Thin Man,** *and other works of the "hard-boiled detective" school; in fact, he virtually created it, with his work in* **Black Mask** *magazine and elsewhere, and his heroes—Sam Spade, the Continental Op, Nick and Nora Charles—are among the most influential in twentieth-century literature. And Raymond Chandler, of course, is the creator of Philip Marlowe, the Spade-influenced detective hero of* **Farewell, My Lovely; The Big Sleep;** *and other novels of almost equal importance to the "hard-boiled" genre.*

Since 1977 Don Herron has conducted a Literary Walking Tour ' downtown San Francisco which covers the real-life places and equivalents thereof which were frequented in years past by Deshiell Hammett and /or his fabulous creations. My wife Dann and I first took his tour a few years back; and when we got the go-ahead for JONNI THUNDER, we took it again, so that we could get the feel of San Francisco for the two issues of the mini-series which would take place there.

Don was kind enough to spend some extra time with us as well, to help with the local color in what has become one of Dann's and my favorite cities. And we, in turn, thought it might be fun to shoehorn Don and one of his hard-trekking tour groups into a panel or two.

So next time you're in the City by the Bay between May and October (the period during which Don gives his tours), do yourself a favor and contact the peripatetic Mr. Herron, hear? But make sure you've got your walking-shoes on!

Now, here are a few of your comments on JONNI THUNDER #1—!

—R.T.

Dear DC (Detective Comics):

You finally come out with a series that really fits the title "DC," aside from BATMAN. JONNI THUNDER, A.K.A. THUNDERBOLT is now another favorite of mine. Too bad I'll only enjoy this book four times. Please—by the time I read issue #4, I'd like to read that this wonderful private eye will star in her own unlimited series! The first issue made a strong impact on me, especially since some of my favorite TV shows are *Charlie's Angels, Cagney and Lacey,* and *Partners in Crime,* all of which star women as either police detectives or as private investigators. So you know how I felt when I read what this title was going to consist of!

I would really like to see this character become a permanent fixture in the DC Universe. The writing and art are excellent. Even when Jonni changes into a Thunderbolt, the title has more of an air of reality to it than most comics. But I also hope Jonni does not always rely upon the Thunderbolt; she is a very resourceful lady and has a brain to use, also.

Edward Witt
1 Edward Place
Perth Amboy, NJ 08861

And she'll keep *using it, too. As for the relationship between Jonni Thunder, P.I., and her Thunderbolt persona and its possible future—see our final note, below.*

—R.T.

Dear DC,

I was very eager for the release of the first issue of the JONNI THUNDER mini-series, for various reasons. First and I suppose foremost, the artistic return of Dick Giordano. I have long been a fan of Dick's art, as Neal Adams' principal inker, and for much stunning artwork on his own, such as the Aquaman strip that ran a few years back in ADVENTURE COMICS, and for his work on the Stephanie Starr series in STAR*REACH. JONNI THUNDER is very reminiscent of the beautiful Miss Starr, perhaps even more beautiful.

This is also a leading reason for my liking this new series: Jonni, too, is a tough P.I. in the old mold, only she's a woman—and a super-hero, to boot!

The writing was flawless, also. Great one-liners, plenty of action, and a really smooth-running story all the way around. This was like reading a movie, and I like that quality in comics. This is going to be one heck of a comic book, and I'll be around for the three final chapters. Again, though, I'd just like to mention how stunning Dick's artwork is in this book, for instance pages 6, 7, 11, and that final frame on p. 25—just great artwork! Thanks a lot, Roy, Dann, Dick, and everyone involved. The JONNI THUNDER mini-series is an undeniable hit!

Mark Waldman
9639 Amigo Ave.
Northridge, CA 91324

So 'twould seem, Mark, so 'twould seem. By the way, just for the record, I wanted it known that those "great one-liners" and much of the rest of the writing were by my wife and esteemed co-writer, Dann Thomas. She did a first draft on all four issues, from the plot she, Gerry Conway, and I had concocted; I then came along and did a rewrite, but found I liked what I was reading so much that I kept most of it, just smoothing it out a bit, etc., so that the result was a true collaboration, just as in our companion magazine, ARAK, SON OF THUNDER.

—R.T.

*****

Dear Roy, Dann, and Dick,

I have been awaiting JONNI THUNDER, A.K.A. THUNDERBOLT for at least two months, and it was well worth the wait. I loved the dialogue and plot. What really *made* the story was Jonni's quips and Dick's artistic talent. After all that, I have only one question: Why isn't JONNI THUNDER a regular series instead of a mini-series?

Thomas Prill
(No Address on Letter)

Mainly because neither Dick nor I would have time to produce the series on a regular monthly (or even possibly bimonthly) schedule, Thomas. After all, in addition to being in demand as an artist, Dick is the functioning editor-in-chief of DC Comics (i.e., the only kind of

"Editorial Vice-President" I like—the kind who knows as much about comics as the guys who work for and with him), while co-creator Gerry Conway and I are currently up to our eyebrows in movie and TV assignments in addition to our comics work. Under the circumstances, we all figured we'd rather turn out an occasional mini-series, graphic novel, or whatever, rather than commit ourselves to a grind which, in the long run, could only be self-destructive. As for the future—who knows?

—R.T.

* * * * *

POSTSCRIPT: As this text page was being put together, I received an issue of **The Comics Buyers Guide**, *fandom's major* ***edzine***, *with the following comments by its editor and resident critic, Don Thompson:*

"Anything by Roy and/or Dann Thomas is worth reading; **anything** *illustrated by Dick Giordano is worth having. It therefore goes without saying that I recommend* [JONNI THUNDER, A.K.A. THUNDERBOLT]. *I'm not entirely sure I wouldn't have preferred it as a straight private-eye series (it reads better than* NATHANIEL DUSK, *for instance) without the super-hero angle, but we only get to see Jonni as a super-heroine for three pages, so it's too early to tell.*

"One thing I definitely like is that there are disadvantages to her power—when she sends forth her astral self, her corporeal body lies unconscious and unprotected until she returns to it. This presents some obvious opportunities for cliffhangers ...

"Don't wait for the second issue; buy it now."

Naturally, we don't want to cast any stones at our fellow-DC-series NATHANIEL DUSK, *but Don's words were certainly an encouragement to us, since we know from past experience that, though he and I have known each other for more than twenty years, he and wife/co-editor Maggie call 'em the way they see 'em.*

As for whether Jonni keeps her Thunderbolt powers at the end of the mini-series ... well, first off, you'll have to wait till next issue to find out. But we'd be interested in hearing your feelings about that even before then. How about it? Dick, Dann, and I have already discussed the possibility/probability of a graphic novel about Ms. Thunder, and we'd love your input.

—R.T.

POSTSCRIPT TO A POSTSCRIPT: Next issue, as previously promised, we'll be presenting some of artist Dick Giordano's inkier drawings of Jonni, as our storm-tossed series draws to a tumultuous close. Don't miss out!

DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR CHILDREN ARE?

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